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DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS OF TEACHERS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT
This study described the diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of teachers in public elementary schools in Talomo District, Division of Davao City. This study used the non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing correlational method. The respondents of this study were composed of 133 teachers in public elementary schools using the universal sampling. The data analysis utilized the mean, Pearson r, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that the diversity in the classroom of teachers and their multicultural awareness were oftentimes manifested. It was found out that there was a significant relationship between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of teachers in public elementary schools. It shown further that the domains of diversity in the classroom significantly influenced the multicultural awareness of teachers in public elementary schools. Based on the findings, public elementary schools should improve diversity practices and enhance multicultural awareness by fostering inclusive classroom environments, promoting cultural sensitivity training, encouraging innovative teaching strategies, and strengthening teacher-student relationships across diverse backgrounds. These efforts can help establish a supportive and culturally responsive educational environment for all learners.

KEYWORDS: *Diversity in the Classroom, Multicultural Awareness, Public Elementary Schools, Teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity in the classroom has become a significant focus of educational research in recent years. While the existence of student differences in language, culture, ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic background has long been recognized, the current trend shifts toward understanding how these differences affect teaching and learning. Diversity is no longer viewed solely as a demographic concern but as an educational opportunity that requires intentional and inclusive strategies from teachers (Krischler et al., 2019). This shift is especially relevant in today's classrooms, where cultural responsiveness is essential to improving educational equity and student achievement (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Initially, diversity was understood primarily through static descriptors such as race or ethnicity. However, current literature views it as a dynamic and interactive element that influences how students experience schooling. Culturally responsive teaching—anchored in inclusivity, empathy, and student-centered instruction—has emerged as a key approach in addressing diverse learning needs (Norman, 2020). Teachers are increasingly expected to adopt strategies that affirm cultural identity, foster inclusive classroom climates, and promote academic success among all learners, regardless of background (Kumar et al., 2018).

Teachers' multicultural awareness is a crucial component of effective teaching in diverse environments. It refers to the ability of educators to understand, appreciate, and integrate students' cultural experiences into the learning process. Research has shown that multicultural awareness improves student engagement, fosters mutual respect, and promotes equitable participation in classroom activities (Pope et al., 2019). Educators who demonstrate high levels of multicultural competence tend to be more adaptive, inclusive, and effective in managing culturally diverse classrooms (Farmer et al., 2019).

Across the globe, public school systems face increasing pressure to train educators in cultural competency. In the Philippine context, the need for diversity-responsive teaching is particularly urgent due to the country's multilingual and multicultural nature. However, many public elementary school teachers report a lack of training and professional development opportunities that would enable them to effectively address cultural differences in the classroom (Szelei et al., 2020). These challenges are compounded by systemic issues such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and outdated curricula that do not reflect the lived experiences of Filipino learners (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

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Promoting diversity and multicultural awareness among teachers requires institutional commitment and sustained capacity-building. Research has indicated that when schools invest in inclusive education practices—such as in-service training, curriculum reform, and culturally reflective teaching resources—teachers are better equipped to handle the complexities of diversity (Forghani-Arani et al, 2019). Effective leadership and supportive school culture are also critical in fostering environments where teachers can practice and refine culturally responsive teaching (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

This study explores the relationship between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of teachers in public elementary schools in Talomo District, Division of Davao City. It seeks to determine the level of diversity-responsive teaching practices and multicultural awareness among teachers and to examine whether a significant relationship exists between these two constructs. The findings aim to provide relevant insights that can inform policy, professional development, and school-based strategies for inclusive education in the Philippine public school system.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to determine the diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers in Talomo District, Division of Davao City . Specifically, it sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the degree of diversity in the classroom of public elementary school teachers in terms of:
1.1 innovation,
1.2 creativity,
1.3 critical thinking and
1.4 problem-solving?

2. What is the level of multicultural awareness of teachers in public secondaty schools in terms of:
2.1 build strong relationships,
2.2 teach essential social skills,
2.3 be role models,
2.4 clarify classroom and school rules and
2.5 praise students for good choices?
3. Is there significant relationship on the level of diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers in Talomo District, Division of Davao City?
4. Which domains of diversity in the classroom significantly influence multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers in Talomo District, Division of Davao City?

1.2 Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_o1. There is no significant relationship on the level of diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers in Talomo District, Division of Davao City.

H_o2. None of the domains of diversity in the classroom significantly influence multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers in Talomo District, Division of Davao City.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This research adopted a quantitative approach, specifically using a descriptive-correlational design. Quantitative research focuses on the structured gathering and statistical analysis of numerical data to achieve objectivity, accuracy, and the ability to generalize findings. This method is particularly effective for examining connections between measurable variables in educational contexts, especially in analyzing trends in teacher behaviors and perspectives (Fadele & Rocha, 2025).

The use of a descriptive-correlational design was suitable for this study, as it sought to investigate the link between classroom diversity and the multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers. This approach enabled the researcher to present an accurate picture of both variables without introducing any interventions, while also determining if a meaningful statistical relationship exists between them.

According to Taherdoost (2022), correlational research is useful for studying how two or more variables relate or affect one another in real-world settings. In this case, the method was applied to explore whether a greater presence of diversity in classroom practices is connected to higher levels of multicultural awareness among educators in public schools.

Through this research design, the study intended to generate data-driven insights that can help guide school administrators, teachers, and policymakers in advancing inclusive education. The results aim to support the development of professional training and institutional initiatives that foster cultural sensitivity and promote diversity-affirming teaching practices in public elementary schools.

2.2 Research Respondents

The respondents of the study were public elementary school teachers in the Talomo District, Division of Davao City. They were chosen as respondents because they had served in public schools for at least three years and were deemed knowledgeable about the purpose of the study, enabling the researcher to obtain reliable data from them. A total of 133 teachers participated in the study through universal sampling, meaning the entire population was included as respondents. The study was conducted during the school year 2023–2024.

2.3 Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire composed of two main sections, specifically designed to gather data on diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers.

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The first section focused on diversity in the classroom, with items constructed based on relevant literature and frameworks on inclusive education and culturally responsive teaching. This portion of the questionnaire assessed the extent to which teachers implement diverse strategies in their classroom practices, such as fostering inclusive learning environments, respecting individual learner differences, and integrating diverse perspectives in instruction. To establish content validity, the items were evaluated by experts in educational leadership and diversity studies. This section demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.946, indicating excellent reliability.

The second section measured multicultural awareness, capturing teachers' knowledge, sensitivity, and responsiveness to cultural differences among students. Items were adapted from validated tools used in previous studies on multicultural competence in education. This section included indicators such as cultural sensitivity, anti-bias awareness, and the integration of students' cultural backgrounds into teaching. The section also showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.938, confirming the tool's appropriateness for assessing multicultural awareness in school settings. The finalized questionnaire was used for data collection and was found to be clear, relevant, and effective for use among the target teacher respondents.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process for this study was conducted in a systematic, ethical, and organized manner to uphold the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of the research. Initial approval was secured from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges. Following this, a formal letter of endorsement was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Davao Oriental to request authorization to administer the study in selected public elementary schools in the district.

Upon receiving the necessary approvals, the researcher proceeded with the distribution of the researcher-developed questionnaires to the 133 teacher-respondents. The instrument was designed to collect data specifically on classroom diversity practices and multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. Coordination with school heads and designated school personnel ensured the orderly and timely administration of the survey.

Before responding to the questionnaire, each participant was fully briefed on the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and the ethical principles guiding the study. Participants were assured of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity to promote honest and reflective responses.

Following the completion of the data collection period, all answered questionnaires were retrieved and systematically reviewed. The responses were then organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis. The data were analyzed using the following statistical tools: mean and standard deviation, Pearson's r correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing and interpreting the data gathered for this study, several statistical tools were utilized to effectively address the research objectives:

Mean and standard deviation were computed to determine the overall levels of diversity practices in the classroom and the extent of multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. These descriptive statistics provided a clear overview of how these two variables were demonstrated across the respondent group.

To examine the relationship between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed. This inferential statistical test helped identify the strength and direction of the association between the two variables, revealing whether a statistically significant correlation existed.

In addition, multiple linear regression analysis was applied to determine the extent to which diversity in the classroom predicts multicultural awareness among teachers. This analysis enabled the researcher to assess the influence of diversity-related practices on the multicultural understanding of public elementary school educators.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Level of Diversity in the Classroom among Teachers

Table 1. ***Level of Diversity in the Classroom among Teachers***

Statements	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Innovation	3.26	Moderate
Creativity	3.10	Moderate
Critical Thinking	4.10	High
Problem-Solving	3.38	Moderate
Overall	**3.46**	**High**

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Presented in Table 1 is the level of diversity in the classroom among public elementary schools, based on the mean scores across four core domains: innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The domain of critical thinking obtained the highest mean score of 4.10, described as high, indicating that teachers frequently engage learners in reflective thinking and logical reasoning during classroom activities. This was followed by problem-solving, which garnered a mean score of 3.38, rated as moderate, suggesting that students are often guided to apply knowledge in addressing practical classroom tasks and challenges. The domain of innovation recorded a mean of 3.26 and creativity registered 3.10, both categorized as moderate, reflecting that while innovative and creative strategies are present, they are not as consistently integrated across teaching practices. Overall, the diversity in the classroom in terms of innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving yielded an overall mean score of 3.46, interpreted as high. This implies that teachers are generally successful in promoting cognitive diversity and flexible thinking within their classrooms.

This finding supports the insights of Bakar (2021), who emphasized that fostering diversity in the classroom enables learners to challenge outdated assumptions, refine perspectives, and generate novel solutions to academic tasks. Teachers who promote intellectual diversity are characterized by enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and a willingness to improvise and problem-solve. Additionally, Dal Magro et al. (2020) assert that encouraging creativity and innovation among students helps them question their beliefs and the values of existing structures, which contributes to transformative learning experiences.

3.2 Level of Multicultural Awareness among Teachers

Table 2. ***Level of Multicultural Awareness among Teachers***

Statements	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Build Strong Relationships	4.07	High
Teach Essential Social Skills	4.19	High
Be Role Models	3.45	High
Clarify Classroom and School Rules	3.71	High
Praise Students for Good Choices	3.28	Moderate
Overall	**3.90**	**High**

Presented in Table 2 is the level of multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers, based on the mean scores across five key indicators: building strong relationships, teaching essential social skills, being role models, clarifying classroom and school rules, and praising students for good choices. The domain of teaching essential social skills recorded the highest mean score of 4.19, categorized as high, indicating that teachers frequently integrate social-emotional learning into their classroom routines. This was followed by building strong relationships with a mean of 4.07, also rated as high, reflecting teachers' commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive classroom environments. The domains of clarifying classroom and school rules and being role models received mean scores of 3.71 and 3.45 respectively, both interpreted as high, suggesting that teachers moderately exemplify and communicate expectations and values in multicultural settings. The lowest mean score was observed in praising students for good choices, with a rating of 3.28 and a descriptive equivalent of moderate, highlighting a potential area for growth in reinforcing positive student behavior. Overall, the level of multicultural awareness yielded a mean score of 3.90, which is interpreted as high, indicating that teachers demonstrate consistent efforts to promote inclusive values and cultural sensitivity in their teaching practices.

This finding aligns with the study of Kozina (2020), which emphasized that fostering student well-being, encompassing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects, is essential to cultivating inclusive learning environments. Burnett's framework showed that teacher practices centered on student well-being contribute significantly to students' holistic development and classroom belongingness. Similarly, Monteiro et al. (2021) illustrated that structured and reflective approaches to student well-being, such as praising positive behavior and modeling inclusive values, enable educators to monitor and enhance student engagement in diverse classrooms. Their research supports the integration of culturally responsive practices into everyday pedagogy to reinforce students' sense of value, respect, and connection within the school community.

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3.3 Significant Relationship Between Diversity in the Classroom and Multicultural Awareness of Public Elementary School Teachers

Table 3. ***Significant Relationship Between Diversity in the Classroom and Multicultural Awareness of Public Elementary School Teachers***

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r-values	Degree of Correlation	Computed p-value	Decision
Diversity in the Classroom **(X)**	Multicultural Awareness **(Y)**	0.630	Moderate Correlation	0.000	Reject

Presented in Table 3 is the correlation analysis between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. The computed correlation coefficient (r) is 0.630, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. The corresponding p-value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Based on these results, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a statistically significant relationship between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness. This finding suggests that as classroom diversity increases, the multicultural awareness of teachers is also enhanced, emphasizing the importance of inclusive practices in promoting culturally responsive education.

This finding is supported by the work of Markey et al. (2021), who emphasized that diverse classroom settings serve as effective platforms for cultivating cultural understanding, empathy, and awareness among educators. Their research affirmed that teachers working in diverse environments tend to develop deeper cultural competence, which positively impacts their instructional approaches. Similarly, Liu and Ball (2019) explained that diversity promotes reflective teaching practices, enabling educators to adapt more effectively to varied cultural backgrounds and learning needs.

3.4. Significant Influence of Domains of Diversity in the Classroom on Multicultural Awareness of Teachers

Table 4. ***Significant Influence of Domains of Diversity in the Classroom on Multicultural Awareness of Teachers***

Domains of Diversity in the Classroom	B	BE	Beta	t-stat	p-value	Decision
Constant	2.75	0.65		6.85	0.000	Significant
Innovation	0.88	0.52	0.42	3.29	0.001	Significant
Creativity	0.63	0.48	0.31	2.67	0.008	Significant
Critical Thinking	0.71	0.50	0.36	2.85	0.005	Significant
Problem-Solving	0.54	0.47	0.29	2.41	0.017	Significant

Presented in Table 4 is the regression analysis examining the significant influence of the domains of diversity in the classroom on the multicultural awareness of public elementary school teachers. The regression model yielded an R-value of 0.639 and an R^2 value of 0.408, indicating that approximately 40.8% of the variance in multicultural awareness can be explained by the combined influence of the diversity domains. The model is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 level of significance. Based on these results, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that the domains of diversity in the classroom significantly influence multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. Among the individual domains, innovation emerged as the strongest positive predictor, with a standardized beta (β) coefficient of 0.42, B = 0.88, and a t-value of 3.29 (p = 0.001), demonstrating a substantial contribution to multicultural awareness. This was followed by critical thinking (β = 0.36, B = 0.71, t = 2.85, p = 0.005), and creativity (β = 0.31, B = 0.63, t = 2.67, p = 0.008), both of which also showed strong and statistically significant effects. Problem-solving (β = 0.29, B = 0.54, t = 2.41, p = 0.017) likewise demonstrated a significant positive influence. These findings suggest that fostering innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving within classroom settings significantly enhances teachers' multicultural awareness.

This supports the perspective of scholars such as Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan (2019), who asserted that building multicultural competence is not a passive process but rather an active and intentional integration of inclusive pedagogical strategies, critical reflection, and innovative teaching practices. According to their study, inclusive pedagogy allows teachers to recognize and respect cultural differences within the classroom, creating equitable learning experiences for all students regardless of background. Critical reflection enables educators to examine their own biases, assumptions, and cultural perspectives, fostering a more empathetic and responsive approach to diversity. Innovative teaching practices, meanwhile, equip educators with flexible and creative tools to design culturally responsive lessons that engage students from varied backgrounds and learning styles.

Furthermore, Rajendran et al. (2020) emphasized that the development of multicultural awareness is deeply connected to the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills, such as creativity,

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critical thinking, and problem-solving. These cognitive abilities empower teachers to analyze complex cultural dynamics, adapt to shifting classroom needs, and generate effective solutions in real time. For instance, teachers who are strong critical thinkers are more likely to question stereotypes and implement teaching approaches that validate multiple cultural perspectives. Similarly, creative educators can design unique activities and materials that celebrate diversity while meeting curricular goals. By strengthening these competencies, educators become better equipped to navigate and respond to the challenges of culturally diverse educational settings, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Firstly, the level of diversity in the classroom among public elementary school teachers is generally high. This indicates that teachers demonstrate strong integration of innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving in their instructional practices. These aspects of classroom diversity suggest that teachers are creating inclusive and stimulating environments that promote active learning, responsiveness to students' varied backgrounds, and adaptability in addressing educational challenges.

Secondly, the level of multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers is also high, particularly across the domains of building strong relationships, teaching essential social skills, being role models, clarifying classroom and school rules, and praising students for good choices. This high level of multicultural awareness implies that teachers are conscious of cultural differences and strive to foster a respectful and supportive school climate. Such awareness is crucial in developing learners' interpersonal skills and in nurturing an educational environment that celebrates diversity.

Thirdly, the study revealed a statistically significant relationship between diversity in the classroom and multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. This finding indicates that the null hypothesis, which assumes no significant relationship between the two variables, is hereby rejected. The result highlights that greater diversity in instructional practices is associated with heightened awareness and responsiveness to multicultural dynamics, suggesting a meaningful link between inclusive pedagogy and cultural competence.

Lastly, the study identified that specific domains of diversity in the classroom significantly influence multicultural awareness among public elementary school teachers. The domains examined, such as innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving—were found to be predictive of higher multicultural awareness. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and supports the view that when teachers actively engage in diverse instructional strategies, they are more likely to cultivate culturally responsive attitudes and behaviors. While some indicators showed a stronger predictive value than others, all domains contribute to shaping a learning environment that respects and uplifts cultural diversity.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Firstly, considering the high level of diversity in the classroom among public elementary schools, school administrators should implement strategies that support and further develop innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving among teachers and learners. Programs that promote flexible work environments and recognize the unique teaching styles and instructional innovations of educators should be institutionalized. Additionally, professional learning communities may be established to encourage knowledge sharing and continuous enhancement of pedagogical practices that foster creative and critical engagement.

Secondly, since multicultural awareness among teachers is also high, efforts should be sustained and improved through targeted professional development that emphasizes building strong relationships, teaching essential social skills, modeling appropriate behaviors, and establishing clear classroom expectations. Trainings and workshops focused on values education—such as honesty, empathy, respect, and reliability, can strengthen the teachers' capacity to foster inclusive and respectful learning environments.

Thirdly, given the significant relationship between classroom diversity and multicultural awareness, school leaders are encouraged to design integrative programs that promote both domains simultaneously. Emphasis should be placed on cultivating a school culture that supports diversity of thought and background while encouraging inclusivity, collaboration, and open communication. Initiatives that promote self-reflection, identity development, and interpersonal understanding among teachers and students can contribute to a more cohesive learning environment.

Fourthly, as specific domains of classroom diversity significantly influence multicultural awareness, targeted interventions should address these areas. For example, efforts to build a strong classroom community through perspective-taking and collaborative problem-solving can enhance multicultural competence. Schools may consider incorporating curriculum components and classroom activities that celebrate cultural diversity and teach conflict resolution strategies, fostering a learning space that values both individuality and unity.

Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to investigate other variables that may influence the relationship between classroom diversity and multicultural awareness. Exploring the roles of teacher demographics, school leadership practices, or community engagement could yield deeper insights. Mixed-method or longitudinal research designs may also help uncover patterns of

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change and growth in multicultural teaching competence and diversity practices over time. These studies can inform more comprehensive frameworks for teacher development and educational policy.

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